

Saturday 11th April: The darkness of unknowing

One of the hardest things in this Coronavirus lockdown is the restrictions it places on funerals. When our loved ones die, we have a great need and desire to bury or cremate them with dignity – the last act of love and appreciation left to us. I recall once chatting to a florist and asking her what she most enjoyed about her job. I fully expected her to say doing wedding flowers, but her answer took me by surprise.... Funeral flowers because it is the last act of beauty and dignity I can give; a floral tribute to a life. How sad that at a time when this consolation is most needed, we are struggling to give it. Jesus was human too, his death was followed by ritual and mourning traditional to the Middle Eastern custom of his day.

Read John 19:38-42

This account, I generally read on the evening of Good Friday either from John or Luke. I take a tiny roll of bandage, place it in the tomb of my Easter garden and seal the entrance with a stone. The reading never fails to bring tears to my eyes. That Jesus shared in our fragile humanity.... That Nicodemus and Joseph handled his bruised and wounded body with gentleness and dignity; anointing it, wrapping it... and then going away along with the watching women to observe the Jewish Sabbath and the command to REST.

Jesus is left in the darkness of the tomb, in the silence of Easter Saturday and we wait.

You and I know the end of this particular story; we anticipate the transformation; the new dawn of Easter morning..... but the disciples did NOT. They and the women waited... in the darkness of unknowing.... For how long? For what? Why?

All they could do – was to be obedient to the Sabbath command – to stay at home and REST.

Easter Saturday is where we are now in our lockdown world. Across Europe and indeed the world, many are asking the same questions. How long? Will our world be different? Why? The past as we knew it cannot be resumed; the future is- as yet -unclear.

Although we feel powerless, we are not alone. God is still at work in the darkness of unknowing. So let us, like Joseph and Nicodemus, do what we can to act with compassion to those who are suffering and bereaved.... And then REST – take that Sabbath we have not truly enjoyed for so long – in obedience to the Government's command....

Trusting that the Easter God is still with us *and that in all things he works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28)

My Prayer for you this Easter Eve is that which the Apostle Paul wrote to the young church in Rome: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13).